

\*\*\* NETANSWERS INTERNET EXTRA \*\*\*

For the week of December 29, 1997

If you like to play Internet games, you'll want to read this issue. If you don't, well, perhaps you just haven't found the right ones. This week Kevin discusses two of the best online games for people with brains.

=\*=\*= GONE BERZERK =\*=\*=

The holidays at my house weren't spent unwrapping presents or roasting chestnuts over an open fire. We did spend a lot of time huddled around the computer, playing some of the best (and most addictive) games on the Internet: Acrophobia and You Don't Know Jack Netshow.

Plant yourself at <http://www.berzerk.com>. The site and the games you'll find there are the brainchildren of Berkeley Systems (the "After Dark" screen saver people). The games don't play in your web browser -- they use custom client software to create interfaces of their own. You'll need a web browser to download the software and start the game... then you can forget you're online at all.

-.-. You Don't Know Jack Netshow -.-.

You Don't Know Jack Netshow is a trivia game. No, not warmed-over Trivial Pursuit. Jack is a sly, irreverent trivia game for adults. Loosely modeled on the format of a generic television game show, Jack serves up oddball questions and twists that you won't find elsewhere. For instance, if you're playing with a friend and you think he doesn't know the answer to a question, you can buzz in and "screw your neighbor," forcing him to take a guess. Throw in hilarious sound effects and biting asides from the host, and you've got a great time. Each game is 13 questions -- mostly multiple choice, with a few rhyming and matching rounds.

You may be familiar with the CD-ROM version of You Don't Know Jack -- the Netshow looks and feels almost identical, although the sound quality of the online version isn't quite as good. Netshow is for one or two players (you can't play against other Internet users). The questions change twice a week -- play more than that and you'll see the same stuff twice.

This is a game for grown-ups. Not only will the occasional bad word offend your little ones' sensibilities, the quirky pop culture references will probably elude them.

There's also the YDKJ Sports Netshow, which features nothing but sports-related trivia. The questions are humorous and hard. If you're not a rabid sports fan, don't bother.

Since they're multimedia-rich, you'll need a semi-beefy computer to play these games. Both versions of Jack require at least a 486/66 PC running Windows 95, 8 MB RAM, 10 MB free hard drive space, Sound Blaster Compatible sound support, and a modem speed of at least 28.8 Kbps. You'll also need Netscape or Internet Explorer. Jack also works on PowerMacs (but not 68000-based Macs). Macs users need 4.5 MB of free physical RAM, 10 MB free hard drive space, a 28.8 modem and a web browser.

-.-. Acrophobia -.-.

Acrophobia is a word game that you play against other Internet denizens. YDKJ is fun, but Acrophobia is my true love. It may be because Acrophobia (or "Acro", as its players call it) is always a new challenge. Unlike Jack, where the questions change twice a week, Acro delivers a new puzzle every couple of minutes.

Here's how it works: when you start the game, you'll join several other players in a "room". The computer presents all of you with a set of letters -- you have 60 seconds to expand those letters into a phrase. For BBSMEAR, you might come up with "Brady Bunch sequels make elderly actors rich". As if that wasn't enough, you might have to write the acro on a certain subject, like Dr. Seuss or "small things".

When the minute is up, you vote for your favorite acro (no, you can't vote for your own). Each vote counts as one point, and additional points are given for speed and popularity. At the end of the game, there's a "face off" round for the two best players.

As you play, you can type messages to the other players in the room. It can take some time to get used to the chat abbreviations -- for instance, GMV is "got my vote" and LMAO is "laughing my ass off" (which is what you'll be doing). Even if you're not particularly good at it, Acrophobia is a lot of fun. You can play solo or gather friends around the computer for a group brainstorming session. Creativity is a must.

There are adult language rooms and "keep it clean" rooms. The clean rooms are more appropriate for children -- and many adults will prefer them, too, since some of the adult room participants go out of their way to be filthy if they can't be funny or smart.

Acrophobia is only available for Windows 95 at this time. (A PowerMac version is in the works.) Acro requires a 486/66 running Windows 95, 12 MB RAM, 10 MB free hard disk space, sound support, a 28.8 KBPS modem and a web browser.

-.-.- Final Notes -.-.-

It costs nothing to play these games, they're free as air and are supported by advertising. Even the ads are interesting, like no other online ads I've seen. The folks at Berzerk call them "interstitial" ads, and they're fully animated, short (10 seconds maximum), blurbs that interrupt the game between questions. They're a lot like television ads but surprisingly unannoying.

You'll need to download and install a special software client before playing any of these games. (Each game requires its own client.) To do so, point your browser to <http://www.berzerk.com>, pick the game you want to play then press Download. After downloading, installation is hassle-free: just double-click the installer icon and the installer will take care of the rest.

=\*=\*= SITES MENTIONED IN THIS ISSUE +\*+++

Berzerk: <http://www.berzerk.com>

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The NetAnswers Internet Extra is free to all CompuServe members. It's available in the Internet Community Forum -- GO INETCOM and look in file library 11, "NetAnswers".

Got comments or ideas for future newsletter issues? We want to hear 'em. Just send a message to [savetz@compuserve.com](mailto:savetz@compuserve.com) (74774,2725).

The only man who could ever teach me, was the son of a preacher man. The only one who could ever reach me was... copyright 1998 by Kevin Savetz.